

## [Belle Little]

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Life History

Folklore,

Miss Effie Cowan,

McLennanCounty, Texas,

District 8.

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### REFERENCE:

Interview with Mrs Belle Little, White Pioneer, Mart, Texas.

"I was born in Little Rock Arkansas, on the 3rd of April 1867. I came to Texas with my parents, J.W. and Sarah Louise Mulloy, in the year 1872. We drove through the country in an old covered wagon with oxen as our team. We crossed the Red river in a ferry boat, I remember that when father drove the wagon on the ferry boat the wagon was so long that it would hardly go on the boat with the oxen, and how the ferry -man swore about it.

"Before father came to Texas he frghted freighted from Little Rock to Camden Arkansas. He was a single young man and living at Atlanta , Arkansas , when the war between the states was declared. He was twenty- one years of age. He enlisted under the Confederate

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flag and served through-out the conflict under General Forrest and Hood , of Texas. I can remember how he told of their shoes wearing out and how they had to skin the hide from the dead cattle to make moccasans to wear. When they returned back to Georgia from the sge siege of Nashville they would sing the songs of Texas, while on the march to relieve their homesick longing.

"I can also remember how he told of how deeply he was affected when he surrendered his arms at Appamatox court house, as he laid them down on the steps. On his return home he took the responsibility of the support of a widowed mother and three young sisters. Father was a descendent of Pat Mulloy who with his brother Jim came to America as stowaways on a ship from Ireland. (This was before the Revolutionary war.) They brought their possessions in a knapsack. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 They fought in the Revolutionary war.

"In 1866 my father married Sarah Louise Douglass who was the daughte daughter of J.C. and Isabel Douglass of Springfield , Illinois, but who emigrated to Texas before the war between the states. To my father and mother there were five children born, three of us were small children when they came to Texas. I am the oldest. All have passed away but my sister Mrs St Clair of Waco and myself. The boys were Jim and Joe, both deceased , Also a sister Edna, also deceased.

"When we reached the Navasota river in East Texas, we had to wait two weeks for it to go down as it was on a rise. We stopped at the old Sterling place, it was a large plantation with its slave quarters, the owner was an ancestor of the ex-governor Sterling of Texas. The men of the plantation entertained our men-folks by taking them hunting and fishing, while the women were wonderfully hospitable and kind.

"When we finally crossed the Navasota river, and after travelling over the , as yet , untravelled roads over the prairie , after leaving the timbered river bottom, what a beautiful sight met our eyes ! As far as the eye could see the prairie of wild grass, it was sparsely

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covered with a native growth of mesquite trees and the sage and wild grass intermingled with the Texas wild flowers, the blue-bonnet, the red Indian head, dandelion, wild roses, and many others made a picture to satisfy the eye of an artist. When our pioneers, urged on by the restless spirit, of adventure gazed on the prairie they could not pass it by. It was a land of promise beautiful with its carpet of wild flowers and rich in fertility of soil, running streams, and an abundance of wild game. 3 "By the side of the Tehuacana Hills there were the cool springs. [?] As the shadows of a long hot day was lengthening, tired and weary from the jolting of the ox-drawn wagon and the slow progress over the river roads to the prairie, the first thought was to make camp at once. The more wary of our party pointed out that there were still some Indians in the country and decided it was best to camp in the open. At this time there was scarcely any timber in the prairie, due to [??] the fires which sprung up from the travellers camp [?] he travellers camp's as they crossed the prairie to his their future home farther west.

"When we finally reached our destination, Waco, we crossed the Brazos river on the ferry boat in January of 1872. We located near the village of Bosqueville where father made a crop, this was only a few miles north of Waco. Father carried his produce to market at Waco, which was a small village also, but larger than Bosqueville, We tended attended the little Baptist church at Bosqueville. It was a severe winter when we reached Waco. My grand-father Douglass had already moved to Bosqueville, so to join him we made our first home at this place.

"However [?] we decided to go farther west and in 1873 we moved to Comanche, Texas, father had a hundred acres in wheat and it was growing fine, when in June there came a late frost and killed it. This discouraged him and then he moved to what is the Blue Ridge settlement southeast of the town of Marlin, Texas. We children attended the public school in Reagan, and attended church at this place. Father farmed on a large scale, and prospered, at this place, but there were a number 4 of families from the Blue Ridge settlement who had moved to the old [?] Willow Springs community, now known as Mart. My grand father Douglass among them. Others others were the Harlan, and Cowan famil

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n families. In the year 1878 we moved to the settlement east of Willow Springs. Mrs Laura Cowan was my first teacher at Mart, she having taught in the term of '79 and 1880. Other families who lived in this community now known as Mart, were that of Breland, Howard, Reynolds, Stodghill, and farther east was the Hardwick ranch owned by Uncle Jack Hardwick, my husband's relative.

“Other teachers following Mrs Cowan, (over in the old school house, and church which stood in the cemetery under the old elm tree which that stood for a century almost, and under which the Mart Baptist Church, [?] with a membership of eight was organized ) , were Mr Westmoreland, a Mr Cressop, McJunkin and Hunt. When the new school house was built across the little branch which was between the cemetery and the village of Mart, there was a Mr Bob Allen, who was a brother of Mrs Carpenter, also Mr W.A. Allen, Mr Overby, Ben F. Dancer and others at a later day.

“My grand-father Douglass came to Texas from Illinois and first settled in the Bosqueville community, later moved to Reagan and then the present Mart community. He was buried in the old Salt Branch cemetery near Marlin on Blue Ridge. He had a large family of boys, eight boys and two girls. They were Perry, Pole, Tom, Henry, John, Buck and Dick, and Jim. Uncle Perry and Pole were old enough to enlist under the flag of the Confederate states and served through out the conflict. Perry was a sergeant of Company A, 15th Ark. regiment. e He was born in 184 1842 in Illinois, and died May 20, 1916 at his home in Mart, Texas. 5 “Uncle Pole is 93 years of age and lives at his home near Mart. Uncle Tom is around 83 years of age and lives in Houston Texas, they are the only surviving members of this family of children. There were two girls, my mother Louise and her sister Callie, both deceased. Mother passed away in September of 1916.

“In 1881 (1881) I married William LaFayette Little who came to Texas and lived with his Uncle Lum Hardwick , a brother of Captain Jack Hardwick, of the Hardwick ranch. Now known as the Gillam ranch. Mr Little was a native of Burnsville Mississippi, and came to Texas in 1872. We bought our home two and a half miles of Mart, in what is now known as

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the Elm Ridge settlement. Here we reared our family of three children, they were William Arthur who is now acting head of the Texas Old Age Assistance Commission, and lives at Austin , Tex a daughter, Dora Dean, whom I reside with, and who married John Drinkard of the Victoria settlement. The youngest son John , is in the Federal Tax Collecting office at Houston. Mr Little passed away April 3, 1922.

“Some of my earliest memories are of the continual fear of the Indians . while While living at Comanche Texas, they still roved over the country stealing cattle, horses and food and feed-stuff as they were to too lazy to work and would slip away from the Indian Reservation and prey on the settlements. One day (I was only a small child then, while at church at Comanche a rider came and warned the congregation that there were smoke from the Indian camp camp's and the meeting broke up, while the congregation fled to thr their homes, but this attack did not materialize as the band drifted in another direction. But to this day I can remember the feeling of fear we had. 6 “Texan's had a saying that “ no one but fools and new-comers prophesied on its weather “ . It has its moods of sunshine and showers, storm and calm. It was on the 24th day of November 1896, at four clock in the afternoon my husband was plowing in the field and I was sitting at the machine, sewin sewing. “ t It had been rainy and misty, when Mr Little rushed in and caught up our younger child, Arthur, age 5 and told me to follow with the eldest, Dora, a child of 12 years. The boy was standing on the front porch and a hammer lay on the floor beside him. Just as we closed the door of the storm house, we saw the house go. The cyclone It came in a dark cloud which seemed to be [?] rolling on the ground from the south-west , and covered a path of about half a mile . Il All we had left after scrapping the lumber, from this cyclone was enough to build a little smoke house. Our clothes furniture and bedding were carried so far away all we ever found [?] pces were pieces which had caught in the tree-tops as they were carried away by the wind. The porch and hammer on which the boy was standing was left intact. Everthing else but the storm house and our family were gone.

This was due to the fact that the roof of the storm house is just above the ground and covere covered with earth, there are very few in this country , as such storms are very

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rare . They are more numerous in Western Texas, since it has more prairie country and more storms. Our house and the house of my cousin Buck Douglass were the only houses in this cyclones path, his house was destroyed also and his little child killed by the chimney falling on it. They escaped with their lives, by leaving the house when the cloud came, but in the excitement the little child ran under the chimney of the house, when it had reached the out side . , and was killed. 7 “The late frost's, and cyclones were not all we had to contend with in those days. I can remember how the grasshoppers came in the fall of 1873, and how they ruined the vegetation. Previous to this it is a historical fact that they came in 1853, 1857, and 1868. After three days the vegetation looked as if a fire had swept over it, they even got into the houses and clothing. Then the drouths came and played a big part in the change from ranching to farming, as the grass was killed so that stockman had to take their stock to other states for range. It is said that from 1859 to 1861 there was scarcity scarcely any rain in Texas for three years. As the country was put into cultivation the drouths gradually ceased, until now they are never so bad that we have a complete failure.

“Notwithstanding the drouths, frosts, cyclones and insects, the climate of Texas as a whole, since I have lived here cannot be surpassed. When the spring comes with its accompaniment of Texas winds and gentle showers, the wild flowers springing up over the prairie with their riot of color , while flinging their fragrance far and near, carry anew atures natures age-old message of the Ressurrection. Fall brings the frost king, who paints his pictures in all his gorgeous shades on every bush and shrub. In the midst of it all sits the yellow golden-rod, which nods serenly as Autumn's flower queen. Then winters chilling blast drives all natures nature's subjects to seek a long siesta in the cold light of a winters sun. The wild sumac the red-bud and the cedar trees which grows in profusion in the rocky sandy soil west of Waco . When when the snow and frost come , make a picture worthy of the greatest artist brush. 8 .

“But the spirit of adventure did not die out with our pioneers. My brother-inlaw, Bill Johnson whom my sister Edna married had his share of it. First he took part in the rush to the

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Indian Territory when it was opened by the government to the homesteaders. He was living at [?] Cleburne Texas and when the date of the opening of the Territory was set he joined the host of people to make the grand rush. He told how, at the signal of the guns fired by the United States soldiers, thousands of men, women and children in all kinds of vehicles, on foot and on trains made the race as if their very lives depended on it instead of a town site of a few acres of a tract of land. The shouting of the men, the neighing neighing of the horses and the screaming screaming of the women made it seem like pandemonium had broken from somewhere, to say nothing of the clatter of the horses hoofs, the cracking of the whips, and the explosions of fire arms.

“Then as the line was crossed and the real race took place between the homesteaders for a certain piece of land and how during the long hot days of the registration the women took their chances along with the men just as they had in the pioneer days, and how they did not ask for any chivalry of giving their place in the line, and how their sex at this time meant nothing to the men. How the period of disillusion came and the homesteader found that he was located on what seemed to be a desert waste of land, how the prairie fires had swept the land and other tracts had been cut clear of hay by the squatters before the rush. The prospect was a dreary one also for lack of natural water. The rivers and creeks were dry from a drouth and only a few springs of natural water and the digging of wells was the first attempt of improving his place, until the rains came. 9 “Then along the railroad tracks boomer trains loaded to the guards with homesteaders come creeping along and it seems to the impatient travellers that the Texas mustangs can easily out strip the slow moving train as they are handicapped by their speed limit. Horsemen shout at the passengers as they gaily wave their hats at them as they pass the train's. Some of the more venturesome travellers as the trains slow down for water, pile their belongings off and settle on the first vacant home patch of 160 acres in their path. “ As the train pulls into the county seat its load of passengers emerge from the coaches tired but triumphant. Townsiders swarm over the new town sites like an army of ants. A small piece of land that not an hour ago was nothing but a patch of prairie now becomes becomes a townsite. Then begin

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disputes over the lots and as there are not yet officers of the law they have their fights and it is a case of the best man who wins. As soon as the lots are claimed and stakes driven down the tents are erected and in a few minutes the town officers are elected and in less time than it hardly takes to tell it there is a little community which has sprung up, certificates are issued and many take out these certificates for both town sites and homesteads of land. Next to the home owner the shop keepers opened up their tents and started their business which with most of them built up a thriving business and many today of the state of Oklahoma's best and oldest business houses date back to this opening of the Indian Territory and the forming of the State of Oklahoma. " From this experience this brother-in-law gained the incentive of seeking his fortunes farther west and so in a few years he decided to try them 10

in Mexico, he lived there for several years and accumulated a nice ranch and had a profitable stock business when the Diaz revolution came and he was warned repeatedly to leave the state by the revolutionist. He brought his family out and left them in Texas, then returned to Mexico to try to sell or see what he could get out of his holdings, and to this day that is the last we have heard of him. We naturally felt that he had been killed by the faction which had given him warning.

"When my husband's relative Captain Jack Hardwick first settled the Hardwick ranch, (now known as the Gillam ranch) he sent for his brother whom we call " Uncle Lum " and who was one of the first preachers in this part of the county. While Captain Jack was herding up his cattle for the Northern markets Uncle Lum was herding up the lost sheep of the Lord. It mattered not if some of the converts were of the clan which bore the brand of "G.T.T" (Gone to Texas), which at that time meant they had reason to leave their homes in the old states, and it was true that it was not uncommon for a man to inquire of another " why he ran away from his home back in another state ?" And it is equally true that few people felt insulted for these questions. Justice descended into the body of Judge Lynch , sleeping when he slept, and waking when he awoke but gradually out of this has come with as much rapidity as could be expected the status of our law and order , from the



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days of Richard Coke who took up his fight to bring it into being , to the day he was inaugurated governor of Texas following the days of reconstruction.